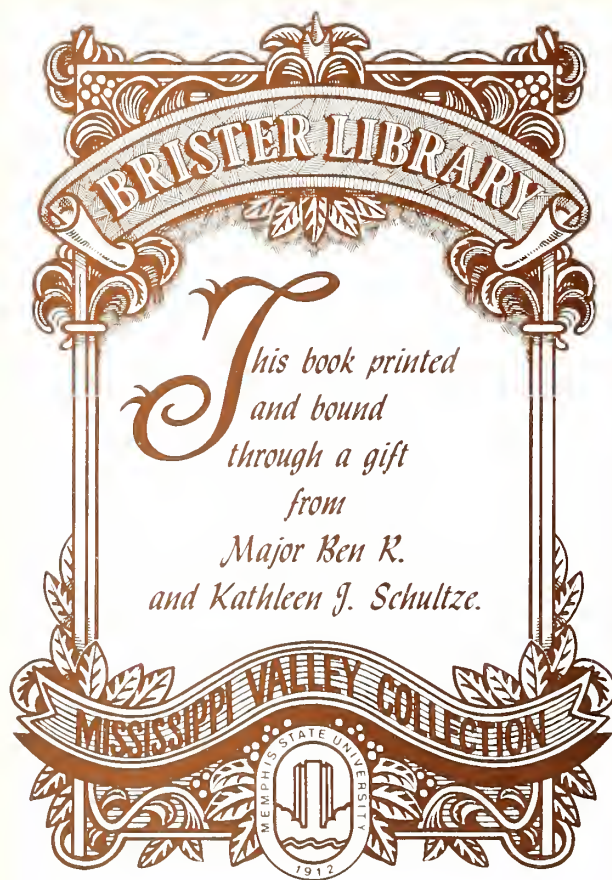


AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN ADMINISTRATION
AN INTERVIEW WITH
ROBERT AND JOANNE FLEMING

BY - MICHAEL MEIER
TRANSCRIBER - BRENDA MEIER
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY



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INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT AND JOANNE FLEMING

MAY 4, 1977

BY MICHAEL MEIER

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DATE

May 4, 1977

Robert G. Fleming
(Interviewed)

(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
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THIS IS AN INTERVIEW FOR THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE AT MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. IT IS PART OF THE ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN CAMPAIGN AND ADMINISTRATION. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. ROBERT FLEMING AND MRS. JOANNE FLEMING IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE DATE IS MAY 4, 1977. THE INTERVIEWER IS MICHAEL MEIER OF THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE AT MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY, AND WAS TRANSCRIBED BY MRS. BRENDA MEIER.

MEIER: Mrs. Fleming, by way of introduction so that our researchers may discover who you are and where you've been, could you give us a short biography; that is, where you were born, where you were educated, and particularly when you met Governor Dunn?

J. FLEMING: I'll be glad to. My birthplace is here in Memphis, Tennessee in 1928, and I've lived here all my life. My education is high school graduation from Central High School here in Memphis and on to an Associate Arts Degree in Speech, Radio and Dramatics at Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri. I'm sorry to say that I didn't go any farther. During high school years, Betty (at that time Prichard Dunn was my good friend--not close friend, but a casual acquaintance. As the years went by after college and her engagement to a young man by the name of Bryant Culberson Winfield Dunn or Winfield Bryant Culberson Dunn--I don't know which way it is--became apparent, we saw more of each other. I attended their wedding, and it was at that time that I met Winfield Dunn. This was before Bob, my husband, and I met, so this was my introduction to Winfield.

MEIER: That's very interesting; college coeds--you and Mrs. Dunn were college mates.

J. FLEMING: No, high school mates.

MEIER: Could you give me a date?

J. FLEMING: Well, that would be 1950, I believe--somewhere in there--maybe '49. I'm really not sure--the late forties or right at that point; I really can't remember exactly their wedding date. But, certainly the first meeting of Winfield was memorable, and he's still the same charmer he was that great day of his wedding and so warm and so personable. And, of course, through the years, as Bob will tell you, we have become very close: couple friends, parents together, family vacationers, and kind of bridge players--not very good bridge players.

MEIER: Well, I can sympathize with that. Mrs. Fleming, have you always been active in politics?

J. FLEMING: Not always, no. I have grown up in a Republican family. Bob is the one who has inspired me to help. When we were young marrieds, before the children came along, the Old Guard Republicans, of course, were after us to help.

R. FLEMING: Oh, you're going back.

J. FLEMING: But it all started then. Yes, since we've been married we've been interested in helping in political things, and I've really been more of the "trooper". I've been the frothy one, the one who campaigns and gets very emotional over the candidate. Don't ask me too many deep questions.

R. FLEMING: Depending who the candidate is. (Laughter)

MEIER: So, when Governor Dunn decided to run you were, shall we say, "gung-ho".

J. FLEMING: Absolutely, a real thrill.

MEIER: You weren't shy about getting involved?

J. FLEMING: Not one bit, not one bit--thrilled to be any part of it.

MEIER: Well, I'm certain he appreciated your energy. Obviously, it was channeled in the right direction.

J. FLEMING: Well, thank you. He has expressed his appreciation in many ways, but I'm the one to appreciate it because it was really more my pleasure than his.

MEIER: Good. Mr. Fleming, how about you. Could you give us some biographical information?

R. FLEMING: Well, I was born in California, but at the tender age of one moved back to Mississippi with my family, and so I really call myself a Mississippian. I was graduated from the University of Cincinnati in architecture in 1953, and it was while I was in Cincinnati that I really became involved in the idea that the South really needs a two-party system. Senator Taft, from Ohio, to me was a great humanitarian and a good businessman, and would have made a fine president.

MEIER: Robert Taft, the Republican of 1948?

R. FLEMING: Absolutely. Eisenhower beat him out for the nomination. It's at that point that I really got interested in politics. Well, we came back to Memphis, and I went to work for an architectural firm and I found the Republican party, which I thought was a part of the Republican Party, but it was the "Old Guard", you know. It seems that there were two factions, and for a while I got off in a faction that I really didn't belong in, but as time went on the two factions came together.

J. FLEMING: Thank goodness.

R. FLEMING: This was in the early fifties. Well, I met Winfield in 1954. He was fresh out of dental school and I do believe I was probably his third patient. (Laughter) And I'm still here!

J. FLEMING It was considered the height of Winfield's dental career when Bob walked in!

R. FLEMING: But you could always feel Winfield's dynamic-type leadership--his energy. He was always the kind of guy who was going somewhere, but never looked like he was in a hurry; and you know he is traveling. I expect he's doing it right today in his new job. For that matter, I know he is. So, that's my brief, up-to-date, now, with meeting Winfield.

MEIER: That's very informative; so you both have known him for a long time?

R. FLEMING: Indeed.

MEIER: You knew him before he even mentioned running for Governor.

R. FLEMING: Oh, yes. By all means. Oh, he didn't really become involved in politics until after I was involved.

I can go back just a little bit: We were engaged in some so-called "bridge parties," you know--more conversation than bridge--and I can remember Winfield right in the middle of a hand of bridge, when the lull would come on, he would get into politics. He would jump up and go to his dresser drawer and bring out all of these articles that he was saving. He would say, "Now look here, look what's going on in our state," and you could just tell that he was building up enthusiasm to get involved--and it came on strong.

J. FLEMING: But, you know it was not really that he was trying to get involved to become Governor. He was so concerned about the "waste."

R. FLEMING: And the idea of having a two-party system. He couldn't understand why every time the election

came there was nobody but Democrats. He was a conservative, and of course, the Democrats were always the liberals.

J. FLEMING: That's right.

MEIER: I want to return to that in a few minutes, of course, but may I ask you right now, Mrs. Fleming.

Let me begin with you. What were your duties in the primary? Now you've mentioned the Dunn Dollies. I need to ask you how they were organized, for one thing.

J. FLEMING: Well, my duties in the primary--It was decided right on the front end when the decision was for Winfield to run; it was decided then. I remember a small meeting over at Dr. Billy Rachel's office when those who really had their hearts in it were called. Of course, Bob needs to speak to this himself, but he's always been the guy in the background helping to raise the seed money and getting things started. That's another story. He was not at this meeting, but the campaign "hard core" were at this meeting. It was decided who would do what, and when the discussion came up that we needed some youthful troopers and someone really to get them out in the whole of West Tennessee, everybody said, "Now, who's going to do that?" I can remember about six or eight heads all turning and looking right at me. So I had no choice in the matter, but they know how I love this kind of thing.

I got off on a very simple campaign during the primary, making it known with a co-chairman, Mrs. Barbara Summers. I haven't seen Barbara for a long time, but she was terrific in helping us organize this thing. We reached out, and in no time flat we had seventy girls, and it grew to about 115 finally, in Memphis only. Now here were the channels. We fed through children of politically interested people, of course. Right away they came to the fore and announced that they would like to be Dunn Dollies.



The dental aspect--now Winfield has many young patients who just adore him, and they couldn't wait to campaign for him. And these were young ladies, anything twelve or so on up through eighteen. I think the mean age was about thirteen or fourteen. They were just terrific young girls with a love for this man and a delight for campaigning and cheerleading and all that kind of thing. We had neighborhood children--young girls--who just knew him and wanted to help. He certainly was very strong in the church, and the church families came to the fore. At least one of the Dunn Dollies came from that source. I'm afraid I've overlooked one of those facets. We had the dentals, the church, the neighborhood, the political youngsters . . .

R. FLEMING The Dental Society. He was a leader, of course, in the Dental Society.

J. FLEMING: And just really friends in general, whose children were of the right age, came into it. My responsibility was to get it organized. We took this thing very seriously. We had a President; we elected officers, and had a Sergeant at Arms. We met once a week and we had so many girls that we broke the thing into six teams. One of the girls on each team was a captain. Sherrie Murdock and Peggy Wilson, and Ann Daniel and Kimpy Craddock. Now these are girls whose names would ring a bell to Winfield right away. Anyway, they were some of the captains of teams, and whenever we had a sudden call to go to so and so's yard party and troop around--Winfield was going to be there, or whether he was there or not--we could get these girls together and call the captains and they would call the girls on their teams, and we'd show up. Oh my, they did all kinds of things. They wrote little jingles and they would sing, and they would, of course, pass out literature. We took many trips. I don't know how much time you want me to spend right now talking about the Dunn Dollies, but that gives

you an idea. I started off in the primaries with that, and that's what I stayed with through the whole campaign.

MEIER: Now, Mrs. Fleming, at your meeting where the Dunn Dollies were organized, you mentioned that there were some politically prominent families there. Could you give me a name or two-- some of the people who were at the meeting? You said the daughters of some politically active families. Do you remember some of those names?

J. FLEMING: Kimpy Craddock, daughter of Jack and Alice Craddock. Jack was co-chairman of the Shelby County Campaign. Young Ann Daniel whom I just mentioned; her mother and father, but particularly her mother--(it's "Senior" Anne and "Junior" Ann)--were very active in the campaign. Gracious, I wish I could think faster because there are so many of them.

R. FLEMING: Well, she (Ann Daniel Sr.) headed up the women's component of the campaign.

J. FLEMING: Yes, of course. I might hasten to say that our very first Dunn Dolly was Gayle Dunn herself, and if her little sister, Julie, had been just a little older, why we would have put Julie on a troop. Our daughter, Susan, was very much a part of the Dunn Dollies. We had not only Ann Daniel, but her sister, Lee Daniel. Now they both are daughters of Ann and Rad Daniel. They really were extremely active. Daren Everson is the daughter of a very fine artist here in Memphis, Knox Everson, and he and his wife, Bonnie, have been very active in the political arena. Eileen Bland, whose mother and father, Ann and Dr. Basil Bland, have been very faithful Republican die-hards. Now some of these people are not what you'd call. . . . What was the word you used a while ago?

MEIER: Politically prominent.

J. FLEMING: . . . prominent--some more than others.

R. FLEMING: You've got Louis and Jan Donelson.

J. FLEMING: Certainly, Laurie Donelson was one of our most ardent little troopers. She was terrific. I just hate to start naming names--I'm going to forget some; but that gives you an idea. Now there was a Kopald (S. L. Kopald--did not have a daughter the right age to be a trooper) but one of his nieces, I believe, was one of our little Dunn Dollies. Does that sort of answer your question?

MEIER: That's fine, Mrs. Fleming, of course.

J. FLEMING: Oh, and I must not forget Katie Dann, Alex Dann's daughter, Katie. She was very terrific at being a fine trooper.

MEIER: How did Governor Dunn feel about the Dunn Dollies?

J. FLEMING: Oh, that's rhetorical! He loved them. He really did. If he didn't, that was the best act he's ever put on.

R. FLEMING: Well, you know, the Dunn Dollies didn't only do their campaigning in Shelby County; we went into Nashville with them and up into Clarksville. Remember the bus trips through West Tennessee?

J. FLEMING: I certainly do. We took many trips, and our (Memphis) organization was by far the biggest Dunn Dolly organization, but there were several others--in Knoxville and . . .

MEIER: That was my next question. I wanted to know if you headed a state-wide group?

J. FLEMING: We never really coordinated too much; we worked independently, but there was that Dunn Dolly

nomenclature that was going on around all over the state.

MEIER: So there were chapters elsewhere?

J. FLEMING: There were other chapters, that's right.

MEIER: What type of campaign technique did you use with the Dollies?

J. FLEMING: "Technique" is a hard word to deal with. Could I take that and say to you we did such things as?

MEIER: Yes.

J. FLEMING: . . . being on hand for all political rallies, and I think of the thing at the armory--the hot dog supper, which was the night that Winfield announced his campaign--his intention to run--and the Dunn Dollies were very colorful. Of course, we ordered red, white and blue uniforms, and by the way, once we won the primary, we went big time and ordered another outfit. We had a different outfit once we were through the primary. Anyway, they were very recognizable, and always we had the blue skirts, and always we pushed the bumper strips--oh, how we pushed those. We tried to be sure that everybody left with one or two of those to go home and put on their cars. And the political buttons--I meant to put on on you, Mike, before we started this. (Laughter)

R. FLEMING: We still have a few left.

MEIER: I'm certain.

J. FLEMING: Anyway, we would show up at many yard parties.

So many people wanted to raise money in their yards and have a little coke and donut type of affair. And sometimes Winfield would be available to speak to them. Of course, this was the grassroots business; to get the neighbors in to talk. It's funny how it all comes back when we start talking about it.

R. FLEMING: Strictly by his roots.

MEIER: That was one of the qualities everyone talked about.

J. FLEMING: Oh, absolutely. We had a very adorable fashion show; we called it a "Dilly Dally" by the Dunn Dollies. Barbara and Brewster Harrington had it in their lovely backyard around their big pool, and we had quite a number of people who came. The Dunn Dollies were the models, and that was another money-raising thing. Of course, our big deal was every Saturday we programmed, with the help of the people who really knew where the campaigning needed to be done. We'd fill up a bus load. We had a wonderful chaperone system and cooperation with the mothers, and we'd go in and spend the whole day. We'd leave early from a given shopping center here in East Memphis and head out to McMinnville or where else?

R. FLEMING: or, Adamsville, Selmer . . .

J. FLEMING: Ripley.

R. FLEMING: Bolivar. My goodness.

J. FLEMING: Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Districts.

R. FLEMING: That's right.

J. FLEMING: We'd get out and just flood the town square-- the main area--and go up and talk to these old timers and young people too about Winfield. They'd turn to us and say, "Winfield who?" (Laughter)

MEIER: So your area of responsibility was West Tennessee?

J. FLEMING: That's right, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Districts.

This was the area of the Memphis Dunn Dolly responsibility. We did a lot of things. We served fried chicken at the Agnew dinner when Spiro Agnew came to Memphis. Do you remember that?

MEIER: No, I'm sorry, I wasn't here.

J. FLEMING: Well, he did. He came in behalf of raising money for what--Honey, I'm talking too much.

R. FLEMING: It was for the State Republican Party and for the candidates who were running for the state at that time. Of course, Senator Brock was running. So it was a fund-raising thing for the entire state--not just for Winfield.

MEIER: Mr. Fleming, now that we have you talking, could you tell me what your duties were in the primary, and then we'll move to the general election.

R. FLEMING: Well, it has always fallen my lot to be involved in finance of the campaign, and this was an easy one. I have been involved in some since then, and this was the first one that I was in. I remember, oh, I think it was January of '70 that one Sunday afternoon I was called to go to a meeting at Dr. Billy Rachel's house not knowing what it was for.

And when I got there, there were some fifteen men, and Winfield was there. He got up and made a talk, saying that he was ready to run, but he needed some seed money to go across the state and feel things out to see whether he could get acceptance or not. Well, between the fifteen of us we raised that amount of money that he needed. I remember one thing that Winfield said there, and I admire him for it. He said, "I'm willing to give my all efforts, 24-hours a day, but I expect you men to come up with the money. I'm not going to finance this campaign myself. I don't feel like I should, and I don't owe it to my family to take my family funds." Well, that was a challenge right there. And the whole time that I was involved in the campaign I was truly just going and talking to people and telling them what a candidate we had and

selling them on Winfield, and I always came away with a contribution. There's nothing fascinating about raising money. (Laughter)

J. FLEMING: No, it was just that if you don't have the money, you don't have the candidate either.

MEIER: Mr. Fleming, did you head a group of fund raisers or was this your responsibility almost solely?

R. FLEMING: Well, I was given a sector of professional people to work on, and I didn't head the financing at all.

Billy Rachel was really the finance man; he was state-wide finance and a very good leader in this area here. No, I didn't have any head situation--just did my duties.

MEIER: I must ask you this. When you approached a potential contributor, how did you go about "selling" Governor Dunn to them?

R. FLEMING: Well, there wasn't really a whole lot of selling because I think by the time I had gotten there, they had heard so much about Winfield that . . . This is an unusual race. His enthusiasm and personality just seemed to have generated through the whole state, and by the time the people that I got to, that I was delegated to talk to, it just didn't take a whole lot of selling. It was more of a problem of trying to get more than what they wanted to give. That was the thing of my big efforts. But if anybody had heard Winfield, you know, two or three times, it was not a hard sell.

MEIER: I see. Mr. Fleming, still along this line, and this is very compelling to me; what kind of difficulties did you run across, particularly in the field of publicity? How well known was Governor Dunn in West Tennessee?

R. FLEMING: He wasn't really well known at the start, but he had so many firends that he had gotten to know through being County Chairman (He was County Chairman for two terms.). Then, he got to know the County Chairmen in the other counties in West Tennessee, and through this is really how he built his base to start his campaign.

MEIER: So your difficulties, if any, came from simply raising money, is that it?

R. FLEMING: Right.

MEIER: Mr. Fleming, you mentioned a few minutes ago that you were at a meeting where Dr. Dunn said he was going to run. Now, he was a dentist, and not very well known in the state. This must have come as a shock to you.

R. FLEMING: Well, not really because Winfield had run for the state legislature some couple of years earlier, and he was defeated in it. But this didn't bother him. He was still in politics, and he was in politics for the sake of getting things changed around--getting a two-party system--and I think getting a better quality of people in politics. I can remember one Sunday evening when this so-called "bridge club" was to meet, and Betty came over and Winfield was not here. Well, I asked Betty, "Where's Winfield?" She said, "He's in Washington," and I said, "What in the name of thunder is a dentist doing in Washington?" She said, "he's going up to talk to Congressman Kuykendall and Senator Baker, and some other people about the prospects of running for Governor." And, I jumped up, and I said, "You're kidding!" She said, "No, I'm not," and I said, "Where's Winfield in Washington?" She said, "I think he's at the Mariott Hotel." Well, I went to the phone, found the Marriott Hotel, and got Winfield out of bed at 9:30 at night--early bird! I said, "Winfield, what's this I hear about you

running for Governor?" He said, "That's about it; I'm thinking about it, Bob." I said, "Well, you go to it. You've got all the help in the world you can expect from a great number of people," and I was so enthusiastic about it at that moment. Some of the other people in the room said, "Who, Winfield, run for Governor?--Good Ole Winfield?" Really, it was almost funny. I said, "Now, wait a minute. Winfield can do it." So I knew long before that Sunday afternoon meeting that he was going to run for Governor.

MEIER: This "bridge club" that you mentioned--this was a meeting, I suppose, to map out strategy? Is that right, or when to announce?

R. FLEMING: Oh, the "bridge club" is just a group of four couples that we had once a month, and it was more for conversation and eating and foolishness than bridge.

MEIER: I see.

R. FLEMING: It really was not a political "bridge club."

MEIER: I see; I was misunderstanding you there. Sorry. Now, Mrs. Fleming, let me ask you. We've already seen what difficulties Mr. Fleming had. What particular type of difficulties did you have after Governor Dunn announced that he was going to run and after you were organized?

J. FLEMING: Well, I had rather call them "challenges" because I can't really think of anything that was just a headache that couldn't be solved. One challenge was coordination. My family, bless their hearts, had to put up with me on the telephone always at the dinner hour, you know, because we had to hurry up and remind so and so that they had to be at such and such a place for a 7:30 function. Often times, the functions were in evenings--Tuesday nights as well as Friday and Saturday nights. Coordination, and I must say that my greatest challenge and difficulty

was to get the word around to these busy teenagers. That was what was so beautiful about these girls. They had their sororities; they had their basketball games and their other school interests, and of course, during the summer months that wasn't such a problem except that boyfriends sort of got in the way now and then. And we generally did have some "TARS", some Teenage Republican boys--"TARS" is what they called themselves. They would go along on many instances on these trips. But really difficulties were overcome with the old spirit of cooperation. It was a matter of getting the word around on short notice. As I remember it, that was the thing that was the real problem, wasn't it honey?

R. FLEMING: Oh sure. Most of these functions were on short notice because you didn't know who could have them when.

MEIER: I see.

J. FLEMING: But we had nothing officially coordinated. It was just a matter of pulling them in when we were going on a given trip and having them sign up to come along, and they loved it.

R. FLEMING: They made good chaperones.

J. FLEMING: Oh, yes. They really did. But I'm just trying to think if there was anything else that was a real problem. From time to time we would have a little girl cancel out on us. Really, I worked them so hard. When we got in high gear there was much demand for the Dunn Dollies. Nobody wanted to have a function, you see, without some Dunn Dollies for color. There were times when I would call them and I'd say, "Katie" or "Susie," this is Mrs. Fleming." I wouldn't even have to get that far, and they'd say (unexcitedly), "Oh, hello Mrs. Fleming."

MEIER: Was this during the primary? Was the enthusiasm beginning to diminish?

J. FLEMING: No, I would say the enthusiasm was at a high peak during the primary, and continued. We gained more Dollies after the primary--we grew. But the wearing out came along about two-thirds after . . . What do you call the second part of the campaign--not the primary, but the secondary?

MEIER: The general election.

J. FLEMING: Yes, the general election. Well, it wasn't that they didn't want to, but there were times when I had just used Group I and II for something, and I couldn't get the other little groups to do it, and I'd have to go back and call the same group again. And they felt maybe a little worn out and tired. You know, it is tiring. They would go to the shopping centers and spend the whole day. If we were in town and not taking a trip, we'd flood Southgate or Laurelwood and take balloons? We really did have a carnival effect at many places, and it was terrific.

I can remember the thrill we had the times Winfield was in town. I have a picture here somewhere of him shaking hands with the girls, and you know, that was really a thrill for them to have the campaigner with them because more times than none, of course, he wasn't along. But that was the problem; the problem was just to get them contacted and to hear back who could go and how many we would have. I was determined we were never going to have just a little moth-eaten looking group, you know. We were going to have a good show of strength. That was part of the trick. I hope that answers your questions.

MEIER: Yes, it does, very nicely. Thank you. I've already asked Mr. Fleming this, and I would certainly like to get your view here also. Governor Dunn was a dentist and he was not the typical lawyer-politician we normally associate with politics. When he announced that he was going to run, how did you feel about that?

J. FLEMING: Well, we were thrilled because Bob Fleming . . .

(I'm putting this on record for the Archives.)

Maybe you've already told Mike about this when I was out of the room. I don't know when it was, but it was sometime way back before this period that you said to him in our living room, "Winfield is the man we need. We just really ought to have him. He's so interested, he's so sincere, he wants to do more than he's doing," etc., so when he finally made it known to us . . . A little trip that we took in the spring . . .

R. FLEMING: No, the trip came after he went to Washington.

J. FLEMING: That's right. Tell that story.

R. FLEMING: I did tell that story. It would only be a repeat.

J. FLEMING: Yes, but we really were thrilled that he felt that the green light had really turned on for him to do it.

R. FLEMING: Let me interject this: We had a little fun about this thing of running for Governor long before he

announced it. We took a little trip together with a group of other people, and at that time there was a little piece of stationery printed on it:

"Winfield Dunn for Governor." Well, I cut that off and put it on my door at the hotel room and put it up as his headquarters. Well, all these people that were with us on this trip, they thought, "What is that--Winfield running for Governor? Who is Winfield?" We stayed at this place for a couple of days, and the night before we left we went down to the restaurant to eat, and it was so crowded. I just walked up ahead of the whole crowd and went to the hostess and I said, "I have a gentleman here who's going to be the next governor of Tennessee. Could we get a table, please?"

J. FLEMING: This was before he even announced.

R. FLEMING: And before we even knew it, we were all seated down. So I made a statement there and he lived

up to it!

J. FLEMING: That's right, and it was on the way home on that trip, Mike, that I sat down with Winfield; Bob sat with Betty. The rest of the crowd sat where they sat, and we spent two hours, I know, Winfield and I, talking. Not talking; I just plain said, "Winfield, do me a favor. You have decided you're going to go after it, you're going to give it a whirl. Please, if I'm going to help in this campaign--and I'm going to help--please write down your thoughts on this pad of paper, and let me see it in writing so I can go home and digest and understand the reasons that you feel this is the politically astute time to run, and how you feel that you might be able to win. And write it down because then I can be more knowledgeable about it." Of course, at that time I had no idea what area I was going to get into, but I wanted to know. So first he started dictating, and then he said, "No, Joanie, let me have that thing. I'll write it myself." I started out writing, and he took it over and spent quite a long time in deep thought--and that's what I have just given you, Mike. His own words and his own expressions about how he felt about the whole thing, and I'm glad you're going to tape it.

MEIER: These are the ones on the yellow pages?

J. FLEMING: These are the ones on the yellow pages there.

In fact, as I told you earlier, I have preserved the original--put it in a permanent, bound thing in his scribble handwriting, and on the other side the type-written version. And I think that is among his most cherished possessions.

MEIER: I would save them if I were you.

J. FLEMING: Yes. He has this. I gave it as a gift to him.

This happened in April of 1970--February, March?

I forget.

MEIER: The Republican party was riding very high, on a crest of a wave.

R. FLEMING: Absolutely, it was really showing some strength.

MEIER: It certainly was. Mrs. Fleming, I asked Mr. Fleming this a few minutes ago. With Governor Dunn being the first Republican Governor in years, did you receive any help from the National Republican Committee?

J. FLEMING: You mean, for my facet?

MEIER: Yes.

J. FLEMING: No, not to my knowledge. This was strictly a local thing and really the girls themselves supported their own needs. It was strictly a voluntary thing from the start to finish. It was never an expensive function, really.

MEIER: I see, the grassroots.

J. FLEMING: That's right, ath the grassroots.

MEIER: Mrs. Fleming, we'll stay with you here for a minute. What changes did you hope to see during the Dunn Administration?

J. FLEMING: Well, we certainly hoped to see the Republican concepts more greatly appreciated. I guess, from a personal standpoint, which is certainly where we fit into the relationship more than anything, we couldn't wait to see what happened. And that is with a dentitst proving himself to care enough about his country and his state to be a very worthy banner-carrier. You know, that was one of the themes-- the tongue-in-cheek bit. "A dentist? What makes him so eligible?" And, of course, so many people didn't realize the many, many hours and years Winfield had already spent in the interest of the Republican Party in the background.

I don't know whether Bob brought this out, but Winfield certainly did



a lot of reading on his own. And, oh my, Betty used to talk about how she certainly would like to see her husband more often. This was before the campaign days, when he would come dashing in after a gold-inlay implant or whatever you call it, setting or seating, and he'd come dashing in at 6:30 and say, "I'll have a peanut butter sandwich" and go to a meeting. "I've got a Republican meeting"; and this was the kind of thing in the background--a lot of people didn't realize. So he had certainly a lot of foundation. I didn't express that very well, but Winfield had a lot more going for him, as far as eligibility was concerned, than people realized. And, on the surface, the idea of the dentist bit, didn't make such a tremendous hit with those particularly who weren't so keen on the idea of a Republican Governor. Let's see, what did you ask me?

MEIER: What changes did you hope for?

J. FLEMING: I hoped for his popularity, certainly. As far as his improvement in the education, the kindergarten promotion across the state was one of the things that he certainly did a great improvement on. I was really more interested, not so much in his platform as in his popularity. The changes I wanted to see was to see the Governor loved and admired--appreciated--and I think that really was accomplished in grand old times.

MEIER: He campaigned very vigorously for the kindergarten and changes in education.

R. FLEMING: Absolutely.

J. FLEMING: And the penal reform.

R. FLEMING: Penal reform, and he instigated the vocational educational system. The state of Tennessee was probably fifteen years behind in vocational education. As you know, not everybody needs to go to college, but we turned out a lot of high school



students who knew a lot of English maybe, but no vocation, and he was great on putting that program over. That was something like \$140 million program for the State of Tennessee.

J. FLEMING: Another thing I recall. The first thing that he did was to get rid of these signs all across the state: "Welcome to the Three States of Tennessee." Remember that, honey?

R. FLEMING: Oh, sure.

MEIER: I'm from North Carolina, but that's legendary over there too--the three great states of Tennessee. We've heard about that.

R. FLEMING: Somebody thought that was a great idea.

J. FLEMING: He did away with that. That was a very typical move on his part because Winfield is the old, "All for one and one for all" type, and that was very typical of his thinking, wasn't it, honey?

R. FLEMING: Oh, absolutely.

MEIER: Mr. Fleming, how about you? What changes did you hope to see after his election?

R. FLEMING: Well, Tennessee had had previously what we call a "Leap-frog" type of situation where one governor was elected and then the next governor was elected, and then the one that went out was elected again.

MEIER: Clement, Ellington?

R. FLEMING: That's right--the Clement, Ellington leap-frog situation. When you get that sort of thing going on, you begin to build up--maybe not a machine, but certainly you can build up a political power base that is hard to crack after so many years. And,

here again, I think this has always been in the back of Winfield's mind-- the two-party system has got to work in this country. So he was determined to break up that leap-frog movement that had been going on for so many years. And, I think another thing that Winfield knew that he could show was obvious integrity as a governor.

J. FLEMING: Yes, true.

R. FLEMING: That was one of his primary thoughts.

MEIER: Do you think your hopes were characteristic of most Tennesseans at the time?

J. FLEMING: Oh, yes.

R. FLEMING: Oh, I think the state was just ready--ready for this fresh personality; sincere, enthusiastic, full of energy.

J. FLEMING: Honey, excuse me. Speak to the relationship of him to the legislature. Now that's a change that we had hoped to see and he did gain the respect of the Democratic stronghold in the legislature.

R. FLEMING: Right.

J. FLEMING: They didn't always go with what he wanted to do.

R. FLEMING: No, but he was able to work with them. Even between the Democratic governor and Democratic legislature is often a big squabble and a fight. Winfield's quite a peace-maker and he would call in the various people and get things worked out and keep down this squabbling that it seemed had been going on for years in our state government.

MEIER: He did break the tradition of the "solid South."

R. FLEMING: He sure did.

MEIER: That's official. I think everyone would agree with you there. Now, both of you, when did you get the feeling that he was going to win? There must have been some times of despair. Mrs. Fleming, how about you, when did you feel that he was going to win?

J. FLEMING: Of course, I was in the enthusiasm department all along. (Laughter) That doesn't come to you as a tremendous surprise! That was important to feel that way. I just kept telling myself "He's going to win." But, I'll have to admit there were times that we'd get reports in that he was not holding on very strongly in such and such an area, and then that's when we would go flooding it. Golly, I can't remember when I really was just absolutely sure; I can't remember. Certainly, the Primary victory was a tremendous impact for feeling we had great hope down the Pike. I tell you, we haven't hit on a very important factor here, and that's Betty.

MEIER: Mrs. Dunn?

J. FLEMING: I know I haven't answered your question, but Betty, you see, went out into so many areas, and what a little trooper she turned out to be. She didn't know she had it in her; she's essentially a very shy person, but, boy, the limelight just took on and she hasn't stopped yet. I tell her that to this day. She can't believe how she still loves to speak publicly and so forth. She would come back from her little trip. Now, her little campaigning was a separate little organization. She had Sara Jane Scott and Isabel Strong doing one tremendous job of programming where she should go and what she should be doing. She was one busy little gal. She turned to cheese toast for breakfast; that's about all she had time for. I can't answer your question about when I felt the victory coming. But Betty would come back and bubble so much about how well

received she was being and how people in the areas would confide or be thrilled with a celebrity, as Betty was at that time. And she'd come back and she'd say, "Oh, Mrs. so and so, the wife of the Republican Chairman in such and such a county, said that all of her friends are switching over, and they're just so thrilled with Winfield, and they never dreamed they'd vote for anybody besides a Democrat." So I would say that Betty is the one who began to convince me that Winfield was definitely going to win because she had heard so many things in these areas on a one-to-one basis, with the V.I.P.'s. I didn't touch base with the V.I.P.'s as she did. It was a growing thing.

MEIER: Mrs. Dunn then, was as active a campaigner as the Governor?

J. FLEMING: Oh, my yes. And she came to Memphis one time with Tish Hooker and debated with her face-to-face. They each had their time, you know. It was one of those debates where each one had a chance to speak and then the other one.

MEIER: John J. Hooker's wife?

J. FLEMING: John J. Hooker's wife, yes--the opponent's wife. Betty just handled herself beautifully. Of course, her big role was to tell the world how great he is, and she just really laid it on thick--and it came from the heart. He's a family man, and it just came glowing through. I think people loved that too--that he was definitely a family man. I think he had a little edge there with his opponent; I didn't think that came through in John J. Hooker's campaign as much as it certainly did with Winfield--through Betty.

R. FLEMING: Betty was a great campaigner.

J. FLEMING: I wish I could think of some specific things in her campaigning. They just had her going to all kinds of affairs across the state. I have so many clippings, and I wish we

could show the pictures on this tape. She really was a tremendous asset. And I don't know whether we're going to get into this, but after he became the governor, all the wonderful things that she did to draw (and Winfield supported the idea) the people of this state into the mansion. She opened the mansion up one day a week to have the people share the mansion. After all, it belongs to the state. It doesn't just belong to the governor. Betty and Winfield are "people" persons. You know, I guess really that's why we knew they were going to win, because they were energetic and tireless about getting out and shaking hands and being eyeball-to-eyeball with every person on the whole spectrum in the society.

MEIER: Behind every successful man there is a woman, I suppose?

J. FLEMING: Oh, yes. She was terrific and still is!

MEIER: So you never had the feeling that he was going to lose at all?

J. FLEMING: Not really. I didn't; did you honey? It's been six or seven years ago.

R. FLEMING: Well, I had two instances when I had apprehensions. One was in the primary, and Maxie Jarman was running in the primary, and I had the great fear that Maxie Jarman would literally buy the primary with the great amount of money that he had and the television exposure he could buy. And then I knew if Maxie Jarman were to win the primary, the Republican Party would lose--we would have John J. Hooker. Well as it was Maxie Jarman lost. The other time I had some apprehensions was when Winfield agreed to three debates with John J. Hooker. Knowing that Hooker was quite a debater, a lawyer, speaks well on his feet, and I knew

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Winfield speaks well on his feet, but he's not a lawyer. But we heard the second debate in Jackson, Tennessee, and coming away from that debate I knew it was full steam ahead, because he literally took this opponent to task there. John J. brought on the real ugly part of the debate, but Winfield stood up to him quite delightfully, I would say--in a nice kind of way--and put him down. I knew then he could handle it. That was when I really knew that it was going to be a winner.

J. FLEMING: Winfield's campaigning was always positive.

R. FLEMING: Absolutely.

J. FLEMING: Not tearing down.

R. FLEMING: That's what hurt John J. in that debate; he was criticizing Winfield. He said, "Now aren't you really from Mississippi?" And Winfield said, "Yes, Mr. Hooker, I am. I wanted to be down there close to my mother." (Laughter) I don't know anyone who can say that's the wrong thing to say.

R. FLEMING: No, it's a crowd pleaser.

MEIER: Yes, indeed, it is. Now, you mention John J. Hooker. This brings up another point. He was a formidable opponent, if I read my account correctly.

R. FLEMING: Indeed.

MEIER: How about the relative strength of these two men as far as political support is concerned during the general election? How did Governor Dunn defeat John J. Hooker, who is an established Democrat, and overcome this minority position? How do you think he did this?

R. FLEMING: Well, John J. Hooker had something going very badly for him, and that was some business dealings and franchising of some food operations. I think this was perhaps the one

most important thing that just really took Hooker out of the picture right from the beginning. He was popular among the Democrats but I don't think he ever had a chance to win against a man like Winfield. The Republicans had some other candidates he probably could have defeated. John J. Hooker had an enormous amount of money to back him, and of course, you know that can promote you right into a primary if you get enough exposure from that mike. But I think this is the main thing--his prior business dealings before he decided to run. Since then, he has tried to run and it is still hanging over him.

MEIER: Yes, I recall, he attempted the gubernatorial primary a year or so ago.

R. FLEMING: Correct.

MEIER: In what part of the state was Governor Dunn the strongest?

J. FLEMING: You mean other than here?

MEIER: He was very strong in West Tennessee.

R. FLEMING: Very strong in West Tennessee; very strong in East Tennessee; and Middle Tennessee traditionally stayed with the Democratic Party, of course.

MEIER: I see, Mrs. Fleming, let's continue here. Were there any issues about which you felt very strongly?

J. FLEMING: In Winfield's campaign?

MEIER: Yes.

J. FLEMING: Well, I really appreciated his strong stand for improving the educational system. Bob has always been such a proponent of vocational education, and Winfield really carried on strong about that. I would say that was my favorite point that he made. He was really trying to upgrade and dignify the fields that don't require the

college degree. . . That was my favorite--the kindergarten approach. Of course, having children, we were interested in education. And fiscal responsibility--of course, we all liked that idea.

MEIER: Mr. Fleming, how about you. Were there any issues about which you felt very strongly?

R. FLEMING: Well, the same things that Joanne has mentioned. I will say this though. Betty was one of the big prime movers behind the kindergarten. Of course, she's a former school teacher and had taught, so she would be most deeply involved in the thinking of a kindergarten program. Having taught in the level above kindergarten, she could see kids coming into school just needing more training before they even got into school. But definite and specific issues--I don't recall any definite one. I think I was one of those enthusiastic ones, too, and the issues just kind of came along.

J. FLEMING: Well, his integrity--That's the thing we all loved about Winfield, and we just knew that's what the state needs--that's what the country needs--that's what the world needs--more Winfield Dunns.

MEIER: This kindergarten issue. If I recall the state legislature never approved that.

R. FLEMING: I think they funded a part of it--not to the fullest extent that they had proposed to do. The vocational technical training schools--they did fund that in its entirety and it is virtually complete now.

MEIER: Is State Technical Institute an example?

R. FLEMING: No, that's a different type. State Tech is for those who have completed high school and want to get two years of technical training. The vocational technical training

is the high school part. It's all high school.

MEIER: Oh, I see. That's news to me. I didn't realize that. In conclusion, I want to give you the opportunity, Mr. Fleming, to state anything else you would care to say about the Dunn administration and about Governor Dunn himself.

R. FLEMING: Both Betty and Winfield were the most enthusiastic supporters of our state park system. They dearly loved every state park, and I think they visited every one of them. They did everything that they could to keep them on a high standard--high plane and when he left office, they were all in tip-top shape in every fashion. I guess I'm kind of rambling along now, because we visited Fall Creek Falls State Park with them so many times and I've walked around with him, hiking through the woods, over the golf course. And all the employees that would see him were so enthusiastic about having a governor who was so enthusiastic about their job. He would stop and ask them, "What is your job?" and "How are you getting along?" and this sort of thing. It wasn't a political thing; it was a concern thing. He has a compassion for everything and people. As I say, I can speak mainly more of the man than I can any political strategy or anything of that nature. Isn't that about the way you feel?

J. FLEMING: Oh, yes. There are so many things. I think your point, though, brings to mind the fact that nothing was too insignificant--never has been in either one of these two people. To them no person is too unimportant to take the time to really digest. And of course, through the four years in office, Bob and I have been in the mansion and traveling around with them for various reasons, and have seen the respect and the love that the troopers and the security people around



the mansion have for them. And, as Bob said, they always would stop and take the time for any passer-by--I don't care whether we were in the middle of a tennis game or what--why, they'd stop and drop everything to talk to anybody. I love the way they've shown their appreciation and they haven't forgotten the people who did so much for them with help in the campaign.

Here we go again with the Dunn Dollies, but I must put this on tape! They promised here in this home one day--(we had a party when the campaign was over) no, I beg your pardon, it was before the final election. We had a party and Betty and Winfield came, and the Dunn Dollies were so thrilled to know that they were going to be at the party where the future governor and his wife were going to be on hand to salute them for all the hard work they had been doing. At that time, Betty went on the line and said, "Girls, if Dr. Dunn wins this election, we are going to have the biggest slumber party the mansion has ever seen." And they kept their promise, Mike.

MEIER: Indeed.

J. FLEMING: I will show you in a few minutes the pictures
 of the slumber party of the Dunn Dollies at the
 mansion. Did we ever have a ball, and there's a picture that came out of the paper--I'll show it to you--of all the girls crowded up on that lovely, dramatic, spiral staircase, you know. We slept all over--in every area of that mansion and had the best time. But the Dunns just never forgot. I remember they took so many of us who were the hard core campaigners up to Henry Horton and had a whole weekend. Remember the beautiful tribute they paid to everybody by making it a beautiful weekend for all the Shelby County hard-core department heads for the campaign. But there are so many things we'd love to put down for the records, but the main thing is their kindness and the fact that they never forget their friends. And I'm not talking about

their friends, the Flemings; I'm talking about their friends as a whole.

R. FLEMING: And they have a great many friends.

J. FLEMING: Yes, and it's because they are friends. They really put other people first. And you remember the little darling people up there at Fall Creek Falls State Park who live in the area and how Betty has gone blackberry picking with them and Winfield has gone out looking for the little plant life out there.

R. FLEMING: The little mountain flowers.

J. FLEMING: They just love that kind of thing. They are people who are not too big for the little things in life.

R. FLEMING: Let me mention this story, just to really show you what kind of a guy Winfield is. I remember one time at Fall Creek Falls where everybody was playing tennis. I don't play tennis, but Winfield was waiting to get a court. He came up late. Somebody said, "Oh, Winfield, you come on and take my place and play tennis." Winfield said, "No, finish your game." So I was standing there talking with him and some young chap walked up with a tennis racket, and Winfield said, "My name is Winfield Dunn. Would you like to play tennis?" And, of course, the guy said, "Are you Governor Dunn?" He said, "Well, yes, and I can play tennis too." (Laughter) You know, a complete stranger--that sort of thing.

MEIER: That's a very good story.

J. FLEMING: There are so many things. If I could just take the time to look through some of those pictures, I know a lot of memories would come back.

R. FLEMING: I can say this: Being Governor never changed Betty and Winfield. They are still Betty and



Winfield, you know, from the time that we knew them--they're still the same great people.

MEIER: Now, he has the reputation from everyone I've talked to and everything I've read of being a very progressive, honest governor. Would you agree with that assessment?

R. FLEMING: I sure would.

J. FLEMING: Absolutely, not only honest, but open. Not to a foolish point, but a very open book; and "total disclosure" is Winfield's way to approach things. And the little things that they do like take the time to drop everything in Nashville and come back for our high school class reunion. You know, that kind of thing--always willing, as tired as they were. When friends wanted them to show up now that they are celebrities, why they knew how much it meant and they would come. I remember what a tremendous hit that made when Betty and Winfield showed up for our high school class reunion.

R. FLEMING: That was a real effort.

MEIER: Well, I'm sorry that I can't get your photographs and your table full of memorabilia on the tape.

J. FLEMING: Yes, I didn't realize that we had so much. I must tell you that this stack that you're looking at that's got to be at least four inches high, is I suppose, the most thrilling of all post-election experiences Bob and I had. That was when Winfield was the host governor in November, 1973 for the Republican Governor's Convention. This was the most exciting experience to see Jerry Ford, who was the Vice-President designate at that time--not even elected yet--and Ronald Reagan, and all the others--Nelson Rockefeller was certainly on hand and we had a perfectly beautiful convention. It was just a real pleasure to be a part of that.



MEIER: This was the convention held at the Rivermont Hotel?

J. FLEMING: That's correct, at the Rivermont, and that was the time when Richard Nixon came to speak to the governors, before the Watergate issue. It's really quite a thrill to keep the clippings from all this and to know what has gone since.

MEIER: This was significant for Governor Dunn's career too--his political career.

J. FLEMING: I think so. It didn't hurt him a bit. And, I think he was very well respected among his fellow governors. Of course, by this time he had been to many other Republican Governor's Conventions.

R. FLEMING: Not long after that he was elected Chairman of Republican Governor's Conference.

J. FLEMING: That was a very exciting time, and of course, I don't see how they can hold all the memories they must have--all the exciting things that have gone by. I tell you one thing that I would have loved to have seen changed during this administration. I don't believe we spoke of this. How we wished that he had been able to succeed in changing the Tennessee law whereby currently the governor cannot succeed himself.

MEIER: That's an interesting point. I should have brought that up. Did he wish to have that changed? Do you know of any reference that he made to it?

R. FLEMING: I don't recall. I remember hearing him say, "Gosh, I wish it were." I've heard him say, "It can't be while I'm in office," but I would pretty well assume that he would like to have seen it happen.



J. FLEMING: I think he felt it would have been a losing battle to push for it because it wouldn't have helped him.

MEIER: Yes, he would have to arrange it for a much later date.

J. FLEMING: That's right.

MEIER: Of course, there's no doubt in either one of your minds if he would have succeeded himself . . .

R. FLEMING: I'm sure of that.

J. FLEMING: And I'm sure people are after him right now, to this day, to consider running again. It must be a terribly hard thing for them to withstand the pressures I know are on them from Memphis people, and certainly from people around Nashville, but I sort of think Winfield is happy to have served his state and to step aside.

R. FLEMING: I feel he'll come back.

J. FLEMING: That's going to be interesting. I have not burned the Dunn Dolly uniforms! (Laughter)

MEIER: Thank you both very much for an entertaining and very stimulating interview.

J. FLEMING: It was our pleasure, Mike.





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